

Public Testimony regarding SB 1014 – An Act Concerning the Penalty for Certain Nonviolent Drug Offenses.

Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Sam Tracy and I am a lifetime resident of South Windsor, CT. I am currently a student at the University of Connecticut, where I am both an elected member of UConn's Undergraduate Student Government. I would like to express strong support for SB 1014 both on my own behalf, and on behalf of all of UConn.

UConn's Undergraduate Student Government, or USG, is made up of over 60 students who are elected by the over 16,000 students who attend the University. It is recognized as the official voice of the student body, and works to find out the concerns and opinions of the student body. As a senator in USG, I took it upon myself to see where the student body stood on the issue of marijuana decriminalization. Some of my fellow students and I took informal polls in our Student Union, where we received overwhelming support for the concept, getting hundreds upon hundreds of signatures on a petition to remove criminal penalties for marijuana possession.

After receiving such overwhelming support for the idea, I authored a bill in USG endorsing SB 1014 on behalf of the student body. After lengthy debate on the issue, which was composed mostly of questions on the specifics of the bill, it was passed nearly unanimously. I have attached the endorsement on the following page, which outlines our reasons for supporting SB 1014.

On the behalf of the student body of UConn, composed of over 16,000 Connecticut residents, I urge you to pass SB 1014.

Sincerely,
Sam Tracy
Senator – UConn Undergraduate Student Government

A Statement of Position Regarding the Decriminalization of Marijuana (SB 1014)

WHEREAS, possession of less than four ounces of marijuana in Connecticut is currently a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000 and up to one year in prison;

WHEREAS, SB 1014 would decriminalize marijuana, meaning it would change the penalty for possession of under one ounce of marijuana to an infraction, rather than an arrestable misdemeanor;

WHEREAS, a 2002 poll by Time Magazine and CNN showed that 72% of Americans believe that people caught with marijuana should only receive a fine as punishment, and 4% believe that there should be no punishment;

WHEREAS, multiple studies, including the 2008 report by Jeffrey Miron of Harvard University, *The Effect of Marijuana Decriminalization on the Budgets of Massachusetts Governments, With a Discussion of Decriminalization's Effect on Marijuana Use*, have shown that states that have decriminalized marijuana have not seen a measurable rise in the rate of marijuana usage;

WHEREAS, in 2009, for a nearly identical bill, Connecticut's nonpartisan Office of Fiscal Analysis estimated that decriminalization would save Connecticut taxpayers over \$30 million per year at the state and local levels;

WHEREAS, from 2007 to 2009 the University of Connecticut Police Department arrested 444 people for drug violations, the vast majority of which were simple marijuana possession;

WHEREAS, due to the Aid Elimination Provision of the Higher Education Act of 1965, a drug conviction prevents a student from receiving federal aid, such as Pell Grants, Stafford Loans, and other forms of aid;

WHEREAS, decriminalization would keep first-time marijuana offenders from receiving a conviction that could prevent them from receiving federal aid, and allow these people to attend college to receive an education;

WHEREAS, decriminalization would allow the University of Connecticut Police Department to focus its resources on protecting the community from violent crimes;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the University of Connecticut Undergraduate Student Government fully supports marijuana decriminalization;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the University of Connecticut Undergraduate Student Government endorses SB 1014.

Author: Senator Sam Tracy

Sponsors: Senator Lindsay Chiappa, Senator Hugh Connelly, Senator Jordan Hegel, Senator Charlie Feigin, Senator Johnny Varkonda, Senator Kyle Smith, Senator Danielle Nachowitz, Senator Cammy Kritzman, Senator Salvatore Sodaro, Senator Alice Lowe, Senator Marissa Ocegueda, Senator Rebecca D'Angelo, Senator Dan Worroll, Senator Edyta Tereda, Senator Chris Forstrom.